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ABSTRACT

This workbook brings together activities to aid in motivating children to concentrate, listen, respond, think, and learn. The activities rely upon play-like tasks involving drama, music, and other forms of creative expression. The activities are organized by the season in which they are appropriate and include songs, dramatic sequences, stories, and creative tasks such as drawing. Materials and procedures are listed for each activity. Through each experience, the child learns a concept, a word, or moral point of view. Also learned through many of the activities are the sequence abilities and narrative skills necessary for communicative competence and school success. Included is the sheet music for several of the songs, lists of other activities, and books that would be appropriate for the early childhood classroom. (SW)

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Language Through the Seasons

Dramatic Play Activities for Early Childhood Learners

PS 023507

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LANGUAGE THROUGH THE SEASONS

"All the World's a Stage," and in our critical roles as caring, loving, stimulating, facilitating adults we prepare our precious children for their roles on life's stage as competent, creative citizens. Language will be the instrument we give them to express themselves, to know and relate to the world and to learn at the highest levels. If we can immerse our youngsters in a language-rich environment with meaningful, hands on activities to choose from, we can continue to nuture the enthusiasm, curiosity, and imagination inherent in all young children. The creative child will become the creative adult, and a confident one as well. Most important is what **you** bring to the classroom stage: **your** empathy, **your** enthusiasm, **your** interaction, **your** playfulness, and **your** expectations. These will be the most forceful determinants of your students' growth in both language and self-esteem.

This workbook will attempt to bring together ideas that have worked in motivating children to concentrate, to listen, to respond, to think, to learn. Play is the essential ingredient in that classroom environment. We know that children learn best through play because they are at their most active level. Drama, music, and movement are part of that medium and should play integral roles throughout the school day. The pivotal role of the arts is finally coming into focus and acknowledged by educators. I truly believe that the arts are in our very soul, the core of our being. The more we can develop in ourselves and in our children a love and appreciation of the visual arts, music, drama, the spoken and written word and the body in movement, the more human we all become. We must not lose this tremendous potential which is within our children.

It has been 26 very sweet years with all of you in Head Start- FECEP. I hope I can leave with you at least half as much as you have given me.

With Appreciation,

Judy

Judith Amdur

INTRODUCTION

Dramatic and musical activities are listed and described according to the seasons into which they fit best and are the most relevant to the children. I should note too, that books should be used at appropriate times throughout the year. In the beginning: the simpler, the better. Where possible, the music for the original songs are found at the end of the workbook.

Dramatic play includes formal activities where stories, poems, or chants are acted out. (Often they can be extended into small groups during the morning if children show an interest). It also includes dramatic interactions where you are able to "seize the moment" and extend the child's own offering and turn it into a dramatic event, even a "non-offering." For example, we were reaching for apples from the tree (in September of course). One child had his hands around his eyes not really attending. I suggested that he was using his binoculars to see far up into the tree and we all proceeded to try it, bringing him into our activity.

Center time may be the time to repeat a circle activity with a particular child in need of more expressive opportunities. By facilitating dramatic interactions among the children you are encouraging conversation. Many of our children could be considered "pre-conversational," meaning, according to MacDonald and Carroll (1992), "those who do not yet habitually engage in meaningful interactions with others." The authors feel that their social relationships need to be addressed rather than their cognitive abilities. They propose in their "Ecological Model For Clinicians, Parents, and Collaborative Professionals" (E.C.O.) that language for these children "will emerge from a social system that merges the interactive and cognitive processes for communication."

Through each experience the child is learning a concept, a word. Through the activity the child has a framework, a "script" to help her generate dialogue. Through conversation, role playing, and dramatic interaction the child is learning language form. (It is now recognized that content is far more important than form.) The new words can be emphasized and reinforced throughout the day. For example, we acted out the Anansi story one morning in circle and while we were eating beans for lunch a child said, "just like in the story"--he made the connection! An English as a Second Language child from Peru remembered a story we had acted out and said during a home visit, "Alex was the deer." Another silent E.S.L. child got swept into the Round Robin story, and said, "I'm flying away" as she flew to snack!

Keep in mind also the moral point of view in many stories which we can reinforce--the positive messages in "The Little Engine That Could," "The Runnaway Bunny," or even "The Carrot Seed."

Many rationales exist, but most important, dramatic play is fun, children are happy, and for the few hours we have them don't we want them to be as happy as possible? They also appreciate our playfulness. I often like to quote Tina Bangs (1968) on the subject:

> "The playing adult, the encouraging adult, builds the child's self-respect which grows out of the respect we have for the child."

Recalling the stories we have read and acted out strengthens childrens' sequence ability and narrative skills necessary for communicative competence and school success. Paul and Smith (1991) found that children with persistent expressive language delay also demonstrated significant deficits in their narrative skills when assessed with a standardized story-telling task. "This finding is particularly significant because narrative skills in pre-school children have been shown to be one of the best predictors of school success." Therefore, we can see that reviewing stories, or for that

matter, an event in their lives is essential and can be done naturally through conversation at lunch, or any other appropriate time. Carryover can occur at home when the child takes home a picture from the book (or one he has made), with a simple statement such as, "I was a sleepy bear today. Ask me about it."

I'm sure you've noticed that everything discussed falls neatly into the "whole language" approach. Using the rhythms and rhymes of language, tying the action to the word and then to the written word, is all preparation for reading. Telling a story prepares a child to read a story. We are helping the child to gain a sense of mastery, bringing with it self-esteem and the power of language.

Some of the roles our children will take may be new, (playing fire station after visiting the fire house for example), or familiar family roles. As we observe, comment, take our roles with them, and provide the materials and props, we are preparing our children for life!

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1 MacDonald, James, Carroll, Jennifer, Communicating With Children, American Journal of Speech Language Pathology, Vol. 1, No. 4 page 39, 1992.

2 Bangs, Tina E.., formerly with Houston Speech and Hearing Center, author of Language and Learning Disorders of the Pre-Academic Child, Appleton- Century-Crofts, New York, 1968.

3 Paul, Rhea, Toddlers With Slow Expressive Language Development, Topics in Language Disorders, August, 1991.

Careful the things you say,
Children will listen.
Careful the things you do,
Children will see.
And learn.

Children may not obey,
But children will listen.
Children will look to you
For which way to turn,
To learn how to be.

Careful before you say,
"Listen to me."
Children will listen.

Careful the wish you make,
Wishes are children.
Careful the path they take -
Wishes come true,
Not free.

Careful the spell you cast,
Not just on children.
Sometimes the spell may last
Past what you can see
And turn against you . . .

Careful the tale you tell,
That is the spell.
Children will listen . . .
Listen . . .
Listen . . .

"Children Will Listen"

Music and Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim

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Activities for Fall

Activity: Singing a Daily Routine

Materials: Pictures of the routine

Procedure: Talk about getting ready for school, what happens at their house. Show pictures and sing song to tune of "Mulberry Bush."

This is the way I get out of bed...put on my clothes...eat my cereal...wave goodbye...get on the bus, etc., early in the morning.

Variation: Have children mime the activity (can move up and down for the bus)...when we get to school we say hello to our teachers.

NOTE: Can do the same with school procedure.

Activity: Introductory Door

Materials: Can make your own wooden door with hinges and knob or use something resembling a door at least 9 x 12.

Procedure: Each child gets a turn to knock on the door, tell the teacher who they are. You are so happy to see them. Welcome them, you might find something specific to comment on hair, shirt, etc. Introduce each child to those who have gone before.

Extension: Can place in housekeeping area for their use or do again with any child who is interested. (Many a quiet child can be brought out this way.)

Variation: Role play a "Stranger" knocking on door. What do you do?

Activity: Dramatic Sequence - Apple Tree

Materials: None.

Procedure: Children are apples, wind comes (make sound), apples fall, then children pretend they are gathering apples, put them in basket, basket gets heavy, take home and wash them, shine them, eat them (make eating noises). Repeat activity but ask children, "what do we do next?"

Variation: Shining the apple--with pretend apple shine it on your arm, your leg, etc. Ask children where they want to shine it.

Can pretend they are stretching and reaching up into the tree for apple.

Outdoor Extension: Seizing the moment - if child is atop the monkey bar, ask him to to reach for an apple for you, ask for a red or a green one, etc.

Activity: Song "Four Red Apples"

Materials: Flannel pieces for tree, apples. Flannel board.

Procedure: Sing song with children - pluck off each apple as you sing about it. Talk about the word "greedy" as used in the song, act it out. (You can reinforce this word during the day.)

Variation: Let a child be the tree and hold up the apples.

Extension: Look at different kinds of trees. Read "A Tree Is Nice."

Poem: "Trees are short, trees are tall, trees look pretty in the fall." Children pretend to be leaves falling down.

Activity: October Chant

Materials: Pictures of subjects mentioned.

Chant:
Apples are growing,
Apples are growing,
Apples are growing in October - October,
Leaves are falling in October - October,
Squirrels are munching in October - October,
Witches are flying in October - October.

Procedure: Use motions with children while doing chant.

Apples growing - fingers fluttering
Leaves falling - hands coming down slowly
Squirrels munching - hands to mouth
Witches flying - hold imaginary broom and laugh

Repeat, use visual cues to help them remember sequence.

Activity: Dramatic Sequence - Leaves

Materials: A variety of leaves to look at, a small rake.

Procedure: Pretend we are leaves blown by the wind to the ground. Then we are children jumping on the leaves. "Mother" asks us to rake the leaves, gives us each a make-believe rake. "We're raking the leaves, we're raking the leaves, "swish swish"..."the pile is getting higher and higher and higher!" "Let's hide under the leaves," you suggest, "I'll cover you up with leaves." All is quiet...an adult asks, "Where are the children?" You'll say "ready, set, go"...when they hear go", they'll say "BOO!" The adult will ask where were you? (You hope they'll say, "under the leaves!")

They will probably want to repeat this activity; seek out their recall of events: What did we do next?

Extension: Children can take turns raking leaves outside, have one child ask another "George, would you like to rake the leaves?"

Variation: Children can hold and dance with crepe paper streamers with fall colors, using appropriate music such as Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." (You might need to suggest the movements they might make or comment on their own movements.)

Activity: Poem "Four Little Leaves" (author unknown)

Poem: There were four little leaves so happy and gay
They were dancing around on a tree one day,
Along came the wind, blowing through the town
And one red (etc.) leaf came tumbling down.

Materials: Four leaves of construction paper, different colors - red, brown, orange, yellow.

Procedure: Say poem with children; each leaf comes tumbling down in it's turn.

Activity: Magic Leaves (after discussing what's different about the leaves, changes, etc.)

Materials: Four leaves, green on one side, a fall color on the other.

Procedure: To children: "Tell the leaf 'change to red!'" The children say, "change to red!" The leaf falls to the floor landing on the new fall color.

Variation: One to one if a child asks to do it later.

NOTE: Your delivery in this and any language activity must be an energetic one; try a voice effect as the leaf falls (a trill).

Activity: Pumpkin Patch Song (after a trip to the pumpkin path)

Materials: Pumpkins or facimilies, basket.

Procedure: Sing song (tune of "Paw-Paw Patch"). Pick a child to hold the basket and pick up the pumpkins. Can pause to ask child, "Where are you Ricky?"

Song: Where oh where is our friend Ricky
Where oh where is our friend Ricky
Where oh where is our friend Ricky
Way down yonder in the pumpkin patch
He's pickin' up pumpkins
Put em in a basket
He's pickin' up pumpkins
He's pickin' up pumpkins

Put em in a basket
Way down yonder in the pumpkin patch.

Extension: Pumpkins can be different sizes to talk about.

NOTE: The concept "different" is a difficult one for children to explain. We can emphasize it in different contexts and stress its positive nature: things are different and people are different and isn't this diversity in our world wonderful!

Pumpkin faces - different expressions. Can make up a story with them on why the pumpkin looks that way. You might choose some appropriate music to move to reflecting the mood - a Poulenc Sonata (flute, piano) for example.

Activity: "Dark, Dark House" Story

Materials: Flannel board, flannel pieces for house, window shelf, ghost, box.

Story: Once upon a time there was a dark, dark house
And in that dark - dark house
There was a dark - dark room
And in that dark - dark room
There was a dark - dark shelf
And on that dark - dark shelf
There was -- a Ghost!

Procedure: Say the poem with children, placing each piece as it is mentioned - shout out GHOST! (The children are welcome to do this later on their own.)

Activity: Listening Game

Materials: Pictures of objects mentioned, something to knock on, and different instruments or devices to portray the different characters.

Procedure: Say: "1-2-3-4- I wonder who's knocking at my door?" Every one says this phrase together, then children need to listen and match sound with character--ghost, witch, cat.

Variation: Child can be the character and tell what they are doing.
For example: Child knocks on the door. Question: "Who are you!" Child: "I'm a cat." Question: "What are you going to do?" Child: "I'm going to crawl around your house." Question: "What else?" Child: "I'm going to catch a mouse."
(NOTE: We have already talked about this. A "script" is provided for a child who may need it.)

Activity: November Poem (poet-unknown)

Materials: None.

Procedure: Talk about things that happen in November. (A walking - observation trip outside might be a good idea.) Say poem with children and gesture movements of birds, bees, leaves. Shake head when saying no.

No birds, no bees, no leaves on the trees...NOVEMBER!

Variation: Could sing this rhyme using a good beat (see index).

Activity: Listening Game

Materials: Acorns.

Procedure: "Tell me when you hear the acorn fall to the ground."

Variation: "Do you hear a few? Many?"

Activity: Pretend Squirrels

Materials: Acorns.

Procedure: Pick a child to be a squirrel...put on her "bushy tail," her little ears. Give her a nut to hide in a "prepositional place": under the table, in the sink, behind the chair, etc. When the "squirrel" returns, ask where she hid the nut. After about four children, pick different children to be squirrels and find the nuts. See if they can remember where they are hidden (rationale for finding acorns - It's winter, we're getting hungry).

Extension: For home carryover--a picture of a squirrel. The child can draw the acorn in the squirrel's paws. Note can say, "I was a squirrel today. Ask me what I did."

NOTE: This kind of home follow-up can go with any activity.

Let children crack nuts with a nutcracker--more concepts will emerge.

Variation: "Squirrel sequence"--Say and do: "I take a nut, I dig a hole, I put it in. I cover it up." (Lenore Blank Kelner, Kennedy Center Workshop)

Activity: Pretend Pilgrim Boat

Materials: Boxes or big blocks, broomstick, sheet for sail, pretend food items, dolls.

Procedure: Building a boat for the Pilgrims (or any other group leaving from some location where they were unhappy) can be suggested in the block area. Follow their lead, extend the activity, ask questions (open ended). How do they feel? Why are they leaving? What should they take?

Extension: When they "land," they may meet the natives of the new land; stress thankfulness, sharing, learning about new culture. What could they do together? (Sit around the fire, sing with instruments, sleep under the stars, catch fish, grind corn, etc.)

Extension: Have a "Thankful Feast," talk about vegetables, act out how they grow. Sing Raffi's "Thanks A Lot."

Activity: Walking in the Woods Listening Game

Materials: Drum, paper cups (horse), cellophane (crackling fire).

Procedure: Have the children close their eyes and identify sound they hear.

Extension: "Going On A Bear Hunt" (use book for introduction)--act out with hand movements and appropriate words. Don't forget to review the hunt later. They will probably want to repeat it the next day.

Extension: Move to different beats of the drum across the room. Suggest a movement or follow their movement (vocabulary: soft, loud, fast, slow).

Extension: Dance: "Sun come out- make the corn grow, rain come down - make the broccoli grow" etc. (done with drum).

Activity: Native American Story: "Big Sun" and "Little Moon"

Materials: Flannel board and flannel objects for story.

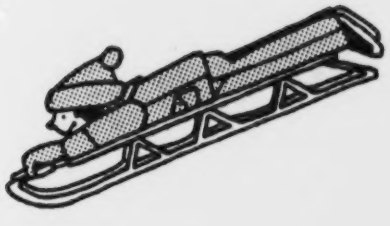
Procedure: This can be started as circle activity, then extended to small group.
Tell story, then repeat with child choosing to be either "Big Sun" or "Little Moon". (You lead the dialogue.)

"I'm Big Sun - "I'm Little Moon
"I live in a big tee pee" - "I live in a little tee pee."
"I beat a big drum" - "I beat a little drum."
"I ride on a big horse" - "I ride on a little horse."
They go for a ride (which one might suggest from recall). Use appropriate sounds. They ride up the hill. They ride down the hill. They ride in the water. "I'm wet,"

they each say. "Let's build a fire."
"I'm going to build a big fire"..."I'm going to build a little fire."
"I'm hungry, what should we eat?" (This conversation can be extended.)
Time to ride home...up the hill, down the hill, in the water.
"I'm tired." "Good night." (They go in their tee pees.)

Extension: This activity and others similar to it are perfect for recreating on a home visit. Let a parent take part too.

Activities for Winter



Activity: "December Remember" Song (see index)

Materials: Picture of article of clothing with word on other side (plain paper plates work well).

Procedure: Sing song with children showing them picture and label. Line pictures up on floor. Try again just showing words. Add clothing items they suggest. Mime putting on the particular article of clothing.

Activity: January Song (see index)

Materials: None.

Procedure: Sing song with children. Make the appropriate body movements. For example: January, January (slap legs in rhythm)...Very, very cold (fold arms together) etc. Add their suggestions to song.

Activity: "Redbird, Redbird Through My Window" Song

Materials: Paper birds - different colors, heavy construction paper window.

Procedure: Sing song with children, have each bird you sing about go through the window.

Extension: Make a body window with another adult or child. Let the children go through.

Extension: If you were a bird where would you fly to?

Extension: Use book "Round Robin." Act it out. Talk about it later.

NOTE: Round Robin gets so fat that he cannot fly south.

Activity: "Sleepy Bear"

Materials: Book, bear, paper bag to represent cave, paper leaves, paper snow, paper sun.

Procedures: Read book, repeat with children saying dialogue. Then use above props to portray story. Call on children to put the bear in the "cave," drop leaves on the cave, drop snow on the cave, shine the sun on the cave. Ask children to contribute reasons why the bear should come out. For example: the sun is shining, the flowers are growing, etc. (all ideas that you've discussed from the book's contents). You can certainly discuss the word "hibernate."

Extension: The book has an illustration of the bear eating honey from the hive while bees hover around. You might want the children to try some honey. (Of course you'll talk about how it tastes and feels.) We can pretend to be bears scooping out the honey but pulling away when they hear the buzzing of bees. (You or another adult can make the sound...be dramatic!)

Extension: A child could pretend to be Sleepy Bear. A blanket could be the cave. (In one classroom one morning during play time, a child crawled under a table and said she was a bear. We found some appropriate "bear music" to create the mood for further drama. (We used "Pictures at an Exhibition" by Mussorgsky which has different segments with different rhythms.)

Activity: "Looking For Mr. Bear"

Materials: Sheet, stuffed animals or animal pictures, honey, spoons.

Procedure: Turn children into squirrels (using whatever magic sound you like) up in a tree covered with a blanket of snow that has fallen during the night. We shake the snow off (shake the sheet), climb down and go looking for Mr. Bear. (Could sing: "We're looking for Mr. Bear. We can't find him anywhere," as we're walking around.) We first check with Mr. Frog who's under the ice (everyone hold the sheet tightly - a "sheet of ice"). We crack the ice and see the frog and ask him about the bear. Frog suggests we look for Mr. Rabbit who might know. Rabbit is in his hole in the ground. (Shape the sheet into a circle for us to look thru.) Rabbit comes out and says bear is getting ready to hibernate. We'd better hurry if we want to see him. We hold up the sheet (everyone holding an edge) and find the bear. We can tell him where we've been. The bear will offer us some honey and we turn the sheet into a table and sit around it sharing the honey. Then we say goodbye and promise to wake him up in the spring.

Extention: Individual children can pretend they are other hibernating animals. Use sheet to cover them. The short classical selections from "Listen-Move and Dance II" can provide the appropriate mood sequence: preparing for winter, sleeping, waking, dancing.

Activity: Winter Circle Warm Up

Materials: None.

Procedure: Use the words freeze...melt, first holding hands tightly then loosening them up. Repeat the word a few times before you say it's opposite. A child could be the leader. (From Wolf Trap).

Extension: You can use other opposites in the same way.

Activity: "Once There Was A Snowman" Song (see index)

Materials: Sheet, carrot, hat, paper, sun, muffler, or scarf.

Procedure: Sing the song with children using appropriate gestures: stretching for "tall," bending down for "small," lying on floor for "melted." Choose child to be the

snowman--put sheet over her, add carrot (a paper one with tape) hat and muffler around neck. Let another child be the sun. Child melts slowly to the floor. We all clap, of course. They will all want a turn. You could continue with a small group or one to one. In a group the other children could put on the props. Good for recall: What does the snowman need? Where should we put the scarf? Where does the carrot go? To child-snowman, while you're feeling around for the nose: where is the front of you?

Extension: Carry over for home: a note with picture "I was a snowman today. Ask me what happened." Take the sheet on a home visit. Take a picture.

Extension: Winter is a dark time. Light and warmth become important. People celebrate different holidays where light is an important part - Kwanza and Chanukah for example. An appropriate song might be, "This Little Light of Mine." Child could blow out real candles, (count how many are left) and construct pretend ones.

Activity: Polar Bear Hunt

Materials: A stuffed bear or a picture, book about bears, telephone.

Procedure: Talk about the different kinds of bears. The zoo calls and says they need a polar bear. You suggest they go on a hunt. Ask what they will need, what they should wear, what they could take to eat. We then pretend to put on our clothing, get our sleds, ice skates and rope. We open the door (appropriate noise), close the door, and we're out in the snow--"crunch, crunch, crunch." We get to a frozen lake--how will we get across? We put on our skates - "slide, slide, slide" across the ice. We put our shoes back on - back in the snow - "crunch, crunch." We see a high - mountain, how do we get to the top? We climb higher and higher (someone might suggest a rope). We get to the top! It's cold! What should we eat? We see the bear swimming in the icy cold water below. What could we use to get down the mountain? We slide down on our sleds , shake ourselves off, and tip toe a little closer to the bear. What should we use to catch him? Everyone holds on to the imaginary rope. You count "1-2-3 GO" and we throw the rope and PULL--oh that bear is heavy. Oh, oh, the rope breaks and the bear comes after us. We go backward in the sequence; see what they can remember. We go in the house, take off our coats, etc., sit around the fire, warm our feet, etc., over the fire, and perhaps have some hot chocolate. (Real or imagined.) The zoo calls to find out what happened and we share our recall on the phone, with some cueing if necessary. Next time we'll use a stronger rope!

NOTE: emphasize "next" in recall or discussion.

Activity: "Little Engine That Could"

Materials: The book, toy trains.

Procedure: Tell the story with the trains and introduce the book later. Can simplify: the

passenger train says, "I'm too busy." The freight train says, "I'm too tired." The little train says, "I'm not very big, I'm not very strong, I cannot, I cannot." Of course the "Happy Train" says, "I'm not very big and I'm not very strong but I'll try, I think I can, I think I can." (At the end, the phrase, "I knew I could, I knew I could" seems to be more effective than the book's "I thought I could.") During center time the children can choose to act out the story with you and select the train they want to be. They get to hold the train and go through the motions.

Extension: In the block area the children could build a simple mountain and a track for the trains.

Extension: Stressing a moral point of view; the importance of helping, the virtue in trying to do the job.

Extension: You could try taping the "performance" of the small group and calling it a radio show. Announce the names of the performers and add a little applause.

NOTE: This is a wonderful activity for a home visit.

Activity: Love Songs For February

Materials: Hearts, cardboard circle - sun on one side, moon on other.

Procedure: Song, "Let Me Tell You How I Feel," (John Taylor, Wolf Trap). Sing with children, do motions.

Song: "Skinna Marink." - Hold up circle with appropriate side showing, when singing "underneath the moon" - hold circle over each child's head.

Song: "Love Somebody." Sing song with children, then use it as a guessing game - "I love somebody who has on red pants today. Who is it?"

Song: "Funga A La Fey Yah" ("I welcome you into my heart" - African, Wolf Trap Book). Can move and use rhythm instruments.

Activity: "Jambo Means Hello"

Materials: The book, globe.

Procedure: Instead of singing "Hello Everybody" sing "Jambo Everybody." Talk about this language and where it comes from. Point out Africa on the globe (point out other countries where different people come from and where they or their grandparents or great, great grandparents may have come from). Suggest a trip to Africa. Pretend we're on a plane. We land and are greeted, and see different aspects of life through the book's illustrations. A good pretend activity within this context might be to bring jars of water to the village (holding the jars on our heads). When we hear the "Tembo" (elephant) we all hide in the tall grass till we no longer hear the

sound. We continue to the village chanting, "We're walking to the village with our jars of water." "Mama" greets us and asks what has happened. The drum can beat out the walking rhythm and make the sound of the Tembo. Soon it's time to return to America, and talk about what happened. See if they can remember some of the new words.

Variation: Children may decide to put chairs together for trip. You can extend to a particular location.

Extension: Talk about the famous African folk character Anansi (Spider Boy). There are many Anansi stories in the library. One that works well is "Anansi and the Bean Shaking Dance."

Activity: Anansi and the Bean Shaking Dance

Materials: Straw hat, shovel or hoe, pot, spoon, apron.

Procedure: After going through the story, choose the players and the rest will be the audience (talk about what an audience does). Mother is busy cooking beans over the fire. Talk about what she puts in the pot. Anansi would like some but is told to go out to the field to work. Mother leaves her cooking to visit a neighbor. Anansi smells the beans and can't resist. He peaks through the window, sees that nobody is there and goes in to sample the beans. They're very hot and he decides to put some in his hat. His mother returns and he puts the hat on his head. The heat makes him start jumping up and down. His mother asks him what's the matter and he tells her he's doing the hat shaking dance. She tells him to go back to work. He goes back to the field, sits down, takes off his hat, feels his head and discovers that all his hair is gone! Then he eats his beans. (And that is why the spider has no hair.)

Extension: Have everyone do a hat shaking dance to some music.

Extension: Cook some real beans together, show them different kinds of beans.

Activity: "My High Silk Hat" Song (Abe Lincoln)

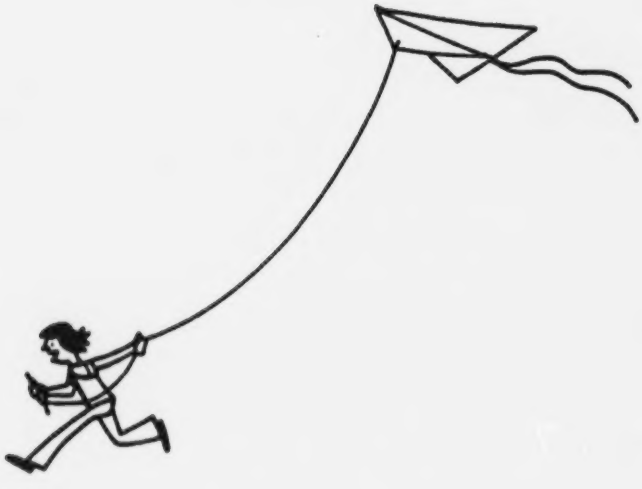
Material: Pictures of Lincoln with his hat.

Procedure: Talk about Lincoln and his kindness. Try role playing examples of kindness. Sing "My High Silk Hat" which really has nothing to do with Lincoln aside from the hat but it's a fun song. Tie in the concept of kindness throughout the day.

Extension: Tie in the kindness and love of Martin Luther King. Use books and pictures. Use toy bus and little people to act out the bus incident and King's response. Try role playing with the "bus driver," telling all the children who are wearing red, for example, to go to the back. Use chairs for the bus. Build up to children of a different color going to the back.

NOTE: A good song to use in conclusion would be "The World Is a Rainbow."

Activities for Spring



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Activity: M-M-March Song

Materials: None.

Procedure: If class does the calendar, sing the March song (to tune of old Campbell soup jingle.)

"M-M-March, M-M-March, I like March m-m-March." Use other pronouns, pointing to he, she, they, we. Talk about the "m" sound and the "ch" sound and other words that have those sounds, such as lun**ch**, wat**ch**, mat**ch**.

Extension: Give each child an "M" ticket. It could be their passport for getting on line, etc.

Extension: Use the first letter of their name: "B-B- Brandon--," etc. and sing song.

Activity: March Chant

Chant: March wind whoo! (repeat)
March wind blow the trees (repeat) (children sway)
March wind blow my hair!
March wind blow my hat
March wind blow my kite - hold it tight (repeat)

Materials: Illustrations on cardboard or paper plates of wind blowing hair, kite, hat, trees on one side, the word hat, hair, trees, kite on the other.

Procedure: Do chant with children using the pictures. Make a good wind sound for the "March wind-whoo!" Repeat that phrase. Ask the children what else the wind could blow. Talk about things that are light and heavy.

Extension: Pretend you are flying a kite - use words, higher, longer, lower, shorter.

Extension: Outside - feel the wind, listen for it, see what it does. You be the March wind--chase the children. ("I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow you away.") Let them take turns running with a pinwheel.

Extension: Poem: "Who Has Seen the Wind?" (Rossetti)
Book: "Gilberto and the Wind"

Activity: "Who Took the Farmer's Hat?"

Materials: Hat, broom for horse, book.

Procedure: Do story and then act it out choosing the characters. There is good repetition in the dialogue and phrases for everyone to say. Each animal says simply, "I like this hat." But the wind comes by and the hat goes "up and down and all around."

Recall: Who was in the story? For home: "I was a cow in the story. Ask me what happened?"

Activity: Introducing Spring

Materials: Hand, lotion, flower, scarves.

Activity: Rub a little lotion on each child's hand and say, "Close your eyes and do not peek, and I'll rub spring across your cheek." (Have a fresh flower for them to smell as well.)

Extension: A colorful scarf for each, appropriate spring - like music for them to move to. Have them start low and then grow high. Describe what they choose to do.

Extension: Bunch a scarf tightly, then slowly spread it out to "blossom." Let the children become flowers, bending down low in the ground, slowly rising and spreading out their hands, and during this process slowing saying it's **S-P-R-I-N-G! (or It's m-m-m-m- MAY!).**

NOTE: Blossoming "Scarf" courtesy of Terri Walker

Extension: Poem to act out: "Little Brown Seeds" (author unknown)

Little brown seeds so small and round, are sleeping quietly under the ground
Down comes the rain, sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle
Out comes the sun, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle
Little brown seeds way down below, up through the earth they begin to grow
Little green leaves come one by one; they hold up their heads, and they look at the sun.

Extension: Remember "Sleepy Bear." You might want to bring him back to his "cave" and ask the children to wake him up and tell him what's changing outside.

Activity: Circus Theme : "Lenny and the Ring of Fire"

Materials: Coffee can and story items inside.

Procedure: Follow directions that are given for telling the story using the props. Offer the coffee can activity in center time for particular children in need of individual attention. A good pairing could be a verbal with a nonverbal or language inadequate child. Embedded in this story is a strong moral message stressing kindness and respect for others.

NOTE: "Coffee Can Theater" and "Lenny" by permission of Wolf Trap Institute and Lenore Blank Kelner (see Resource Index)

Activity: April Fool Games

Materials: Whatever items pertain to what you are doing.

Procedure: Do something foolish, something that might be the opposite of what you should be doing. For example, start sweeping the floor with the wrong end of the broom.

After a sneeze, wipe your ear. Take a book and hold it upside down. The children will probably shout out what's wrong. You in all innocence, look thoughtful, and clarify what they have just said, for example: "Oh, this is my ear--I listen with my ear and sneeze with my nose... oh yes, I see!"

(This gives you a chance to modify both language content and form).

Variation: Say the usual: "There's a snake on your back--April Fool." Then ask a child to try an April Fool joke. See if (s)he can follow the "script" you have initiated.

Activity: "Umbrellas Go Up" Song (for April)

Materials: Construction paper umbrellas, red, green, blue brown.

Procedure: Sing song (see index) using umbrellas; give each child a turn to hold an umbrella and hold it up at appropriate time.

Variation: Use a real umbrella at first. Later on say, "I'm under the umbrella and I won't get wet." Go around to each child, hold umbrella over them and say, "She's under the umbrella and she won't get wet."

During the morning take a few children...walk around the room under the umbrella, saying the poem. You could make believe you are bringing them to their homes, keeping them dry.

Extension: The concepts of wet and dry could lead into OPPOSITES Song. (see index)

Extension: Other familiar rain songs: "It's Raining It's Pouring," "Rain, Rain Go Away," "When the Rain Comes Down."

Extension: Rain sounds sequence: drip - drop (fingers snap), shower (rub hands), storm (slap hands on legs), thunder (feet stomp). Show picture and word on other side.

Activity: Use Of A Puppet.

Materials: A puppet character, new to the children, simply made with a sock or other material.

Procedure: Give the puppet a name. Introduce him to children as someone who has never been to school, doesn't know very much, maybe we can help him. For example, tell "Buttercup" what the rain is like, where it comes from, etc. Ask Buttercup the color of the daffodils - much better than asking the child the color of something (one of those non-conversational questions we try to stay away from).

NOTE: "Buttercup" or whomever can be brought in many times to reinforce concept from different themes, giving the children a comfortable opportunity to tell what they know. They love to ask a puppet or stuffed animal a question and let this character "whisper" the answer in their ears, eliciting their marvelous imaginations.

NOTE: The name "Buttercup" was suggested by Thea Cox

Activity: "Mushroom In The Rain"

Materials: Book, umbrella.

Procedure: Read the book, changing your voice for the dialogue. In the story an ant is caught in the rain and goes under a mushroom. Different animals come in, and ask if they can come under, they're so wet, or so tired, etc. Try to elaborate. Those under say, "there's no room." The animal outside then says, "Please move over" and they do. A rabbit asks to come under because a fox is chasing him. They hide the rabbit and the fox looks around, over, under, behind but can't find him. The rain stops and it is discovered that the mushroom has grown in the rain. The umbrella can be used as a mushroom, slowly growing larger. (Make sure you show them a real mushroom.)

Activity: Planting a Seed

Materials: None.

Procedure: Choose a child to be a flower seed or a vegetable seed. We pretend to dig a hole, and put the seed in while chanting: "We're digging a hole, digging a hole, digging a hole for the carrot seed." We cover it up. We make the rain fall on it, and the sun shine on it. Slowly the "seed" begins to grow. The child stands up slowly, spreads out her leaves, and we all applaud. "How beautiful you look!" For recall we repeat the sequence with different children. You could do this outside as well.

Activity: Book "Dear Zoo"

Materials: Book.

Procedure: Read the book. Embellish, emphasize, be dramatic! Take advantage of repetitive dialogue. The children can say, "So I sent him back." After they've heard it they will be able to say more: "They sent me a camel, he was too grumpy, so I sent him back." For recall you could ask who was too grumpy, too big, etc. or ask, "Why did you send back the elephant?"

Extension: Make the book available during the center time--a good time for the teacher or assistant or volunteer to listen to the child "read" the book. They will want to do this one. They love the flaps in the book where the animals are hidden.

Extension: Use Peter, Paul and Mary's "Going to the Zoo Song." Act it out.

Activity: "The Carrot Seed" (part of growing theme)

Materials: Book.

Hat for boy and brother, tie for dad, apron for mom (sexist though it may be it's a good prop unless you could think of something else), trowel, paper seeds, pennies, watering can, large paper carrot.

Procedure: Read the story, changing your voice for the character. Choose children for the parts. (Those that don't get a starring role could be a neighbor or friend or they could be a star during center time if they wish). The children will take very easily to the dialogue and say "I'm afraid it won't come up." Big brother could say, "nah, nah, nah, it won't come up." The little boy could say, "It will come up." Of course in the end up comes this enormous, gigantic carrot.

(Originally done by Thea Cox)

Animals in Spring

Good Books: "Little Blue Bug" (easy to act out, good action words), "The Very Busy Spider" which could be connected to "Little Miss Muffet," "I Wish I Could Fly", Turtle Day."

Activity: Song "John The Rabbit" (see index)

Materials: A stuffed rabbit, straw hat, pictures of vegetables.

Procedure: Sing the song:

> John the rabbit, "oh yes" Had a terrible habit, "oh yes"
> Of going in my garden, "oh yes," and eating my vegetables, "oh yes"
> He ate my carrots, He ate my broccoli, etc.

Give each child a vegetable picture so they can hold it up when they hear their vegetable named.

Extension: Turn children into rabbits. An adult or child could be the farmer. Using appropriate music, rabbits hop around eating vegetables in make believe garden. When the music stops they must freeze so that farmer doesn't see them. You could set up a sequence of rabbits going under fence, over a log, eating veggies. Ask them later, "what vegetables did you eat?"

Activity: Song For Animals Growing: "Creepy, Creepy Caterpillar"

Materials: Pictures of tadpole - frog, caterpillar, and butterfly.

Procedure: Sing song, use hand movements.

Extension: Bill Brennan of Wolf Trap says, "Hey you bird." I change it to, "Hey you butterfly, get off my arm, hey you butterfly get off my head," etc. Make a butterfly with your hands and have it flutter to the various body parts. (To quiet things down try singing, "Fly away, fly away butterfly, fly away," very softly.)

NOTE: It's always important to bring children back to reality.

Variation: Make butterfly wings - child can come out of coccoon and "fly" away.

Activity: "Five Little Speckled Frogs"

Materials: Something to use for a log for the frogs to sit on, frog hats (a speckled band with bulgy eyes on the top). When their time comes, they jump off the log into the water. (Could have some fabric on the floor for the water.)

Procedure: Sing the song. Choose four or five frogs to act it out. Don't forget to count out how many are left.

NOTE: Hats created by Thea Cox.

Activity: "Gong On a Picnic" Song

Materials: Items for picnic or pictures, picnic blanket.

Procedure: Sing song (from Raffi album)

Going on a picnic, leaving right away (chorus)
If it doesn't rain we'll stay all day.

You sing: Did you bring the pickles?
Children: Yes, we brought the pickles, etc.

Ask children for their own contributions.

Extension: Some children may want to make a picnic during center time--your participation and interaction will expand their language.

Activity: "Who Is In The Barn?"

Materials: Toy animals or pictures, a barn cut out from heavy paper with open door (the animal should be the right size to appear in the door when you open it).

Procedure: The child knocks on the door of the barn and asks, "Who is in the barn?" You make the animal sound. The child has to guess who it is and say, for example, "Are you a cow?" You might have to say, "I'm not a cow."

Extensions: Time for all the farm songs including "On Grandpa's Farm," "We Went to the Farm the Other Day." Book: "Little Red Barn."

Variation: If you've made a trip to the strawberry patch, sing and act out:

"Where Oh Where Is My Friend Jeremy" (repeat twice)
Way down yonder in the strawberry Patch", etc.

Have a farm hat, basket, and strawberries for the child to carry out the actions of the song (tune-Paw Paw Patch). (see pumpkin patch song for fall)

Activity: May Song (see index)

Materials: None.

Procedure: Sing the song with the children responding to your questions such as: "May I go out to play?", "May I play with my friends?", "May I have some ice cream?", etc.

Children say, "Yes you may!"

Activity: Little Boy Blue Theme

Materials: Picture of Little Boy Blue, copy of the famous painting, if possible a horn, hay, blue shirt, blue pants.

Procedure: Talk about the picture, do the poem, show them some hay and a horn or trumpet ask the music teacher to come in and demonstrate the french horn and other horns. Pick a child to be Little Boy blue as we say the poem.

Extension: Have a "blue day."

NOTE: Carry over is guaranteed. While riding the hay wagon at Cox's farm one of Thea's children started saying the poem--(he made the connection)
- This theme poem approach can be used with so many poems.

NOTE: "Little Boy Blue" theme conceived by Thea Cox

Activity: "Mrs. Wishy Washy"

Materials: book, apron, banana, fabric for mud, dolls, something for tub

Procedure: Choose Mrs. Wishy Washy, cow, pig, duck. The book is so simple, because it's a reading readiness book but the pictures are perfect and the dialogue is fun. The children can be the characters or they can use doll for Mrs. Wishy Washy and rubber animals. In block area they could build a house or a tub.

Extension: Song to sing and repeat for each animal: (for melody: see index)
Oh lovely mud, oh lovely mud
I like to play in the mud all day
Oh lovely mud.

NOTE: Thank you to Ellen Reich for introducing me to this beloved character.

Miscellaneous

"To everything there is a season." Use what's happening in the world as a guide. Your books, art activities, songs, creative drama and music will be a reflection of that changing world. The theme approach helps you to easily extend and integrate an idea, a concept. Of course there are activities or happenings for all seasons and some examples will be given here.

As mentioned before, a character, stuffed animal or puppet could make frequent appearances. Children want to see them again. Last year, a few weeks after doing "Sleepy Bear," a "nonverbal" child asked, very clearly "Where's your bear?"

Getting the children seated and ready: "If you sit on the rug, I'll give you a hug"-- can extend to "I won't give you a bug, I won't give you a tug." You are engaging the children and also working on rhyming. With any song or poem think about all the concepts you can get out of it without really teaching. You are also offering the children a "script" to help them with their language form.

Act out:

I can be big, or I can be small
I can be so little that I'm nothing at all
But I can grow and grow and grow and grow
Until I'm a giant with a ho-ho-ho!

Activity: Making A Peanut Butter And Jelly Sandwich - T.V. Cooking Show

Materials: Chef's hat, food for sandwich, plastic knife, a screen effect to simulate a T.V.

Procedure: In circle you could be the chef and go through the sequence with feedback from the children. Ask what happens next. Later have a T.V. center. One child could be the chef and talk to the T.V. audience. Make a big deal about this. Try having a small audience. Take a picture or try a video. (Use those polaroids if you have them and the child immediately has a recall activity for home.)

Extension: Sing the "Peanut Butter and Jelly" Song.

NOTE: Some classrooms have had Dominoes pizza makers come to their rooms. Children can role play in a pizza center or simply make pizza in house area. You can use construction paper in appropriate colors for dough and toppings. Tape on toppings. Put in oven. Bake for five minutes, watch the clock, talk about the numbers. Take it out, slice and share. With a less verbal child, give him the script: "Charles, go ask Mrs. Jones if she would like a slice of pizza." (Cut the pizza into triangles of course.) Or seize the moment--elaborate on whatever the child may want to make--turn it into a T.V. show.

Extension: Use the "Peanut Butter and Jelly" song but substitute pizza: "First you take the dough and you roll it and you roll it" (and so on), "then you take the sauce and you pour it and you pour it" (and so on), "then you take the cheese and you sprinkle and you sprinkle" (and so on).

Extension: Same for applesauce, etc.

Activity: Going To A Party

Materials: Clothing in house area, scarves, music.

Procedure: Some children might decide they want to go to a party. When they dress up, they often tell you that. The music from "The Nutcracker" can create the mood and sequence of preparing to go, looking at the mirror, riding in a car or riding on a horse to the party. Greeting the hosts, dancing, eating, saying the thank yous, and goodbyes. Could use scarves while dancing.

Often, when you intercede and interact with a child who is a lone participant in an activity that is repetitious but with no growth, you can steer the child to higher levels and more productive play. Last year one child continuously played with the toy record player. I suggested that he pretend to be a disc jockey on the radio. We used a block for a mike and he introduced the songs that he played and we sang along. Other children wanted to be disc jockeys too and came over to play with him.

Activity: Restaurant Theme

Materials: In house area, utensils, food, table cloth, "menus".

Procedure: Elaborate on their restaurant idea. Suggest a picture - word menu they could make. Designate roles - waiter, cook, manager, cashier. A child not engaged in anything might be encouraged to come over and be a customer. Help make a sign for the name and the hours of service. Could also have an OPEN and CLOSED sign.

Extensions in their centers:

Playing with airplanes--suggest an airport, pilot could talk to control tower (Hold a block for the radio)

Building a house--talk about the numbers of the floors, make a number ("embedded math") sign, ask them what floor they will be living on. Knock on the door - be a prospective renter.

Sand table--add something thematic or seasonal - paper flowers or vegetables for them to plant and talk about.

NOTE: Restaurant Theme: inspired by Sue Munn.

Activity: "Sitting In My Box"

Materials: Book, a very large box (check with your cafeteria).

Procedure: Read book, choose children to be the little boy and the animals who wish to join him in the box. Dialogue is simple and repetitive with necessary courteous expressions--"Please may I climb in your box?" or "Let me in please." In the end a flea bites each animal (you can moderate this action) and each in turn jumps or climbs out with an appropriate "ouch."

Variation: Make up a song to go with the action. For example, "I was sitting in my box and an elephant knocked 'let me in, let me' in so we all moved over" etc.

Extension: Don't forget to count the numbers. "How many are in the box?"

Extension: Offer the activity later to those who did not get a turn or those who simply want to do it again.

Extension: Suggest and demonstrate other uses for the box which they can elaborate on--a space ship, a car, a boat, etc. Place the box in a center.

Home Extension:
Bring the book and the box to a home visit and proceed. Let Mom look at the book with her child, suggest they act it out with the box. Perhaps the child might want to use his own stuffed animals. Go with the child's agenda as much as possible and build from there. This would be a good model for the parent or caregiver.

Last but not least:

Seize those "Teachable Moments." For example, outdoors at Greenbriar Elementary, the children gathered "hay" on their own. We talked about the farmer and the cow and sang, "Did You Feed My Cow?"

Conclusion

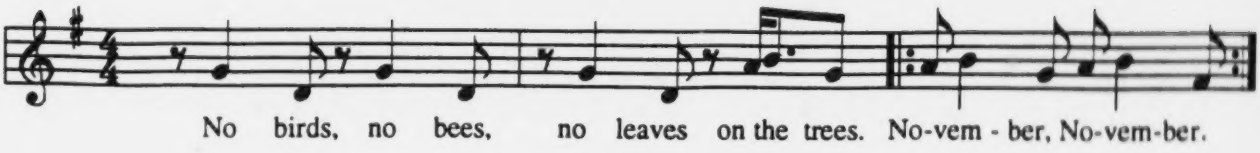
I hope you will find these activities doable, relevant and most important, a springboard to your own creativity. The ideas are here to be expanded, with the stamp of your own unique styles. We can assess our own effectiveness by observing the children's participation. Are they attending, concentrating, contributing, recalling? Are they engaged in the activities, particularly those children with very limited command of the language? Do they carry over any of these activities into their own play?

Through the arts we can unlock the true potential of our children. Through our sensitivity as nuturing teachers we will effectively respond to the needs of each and every child.

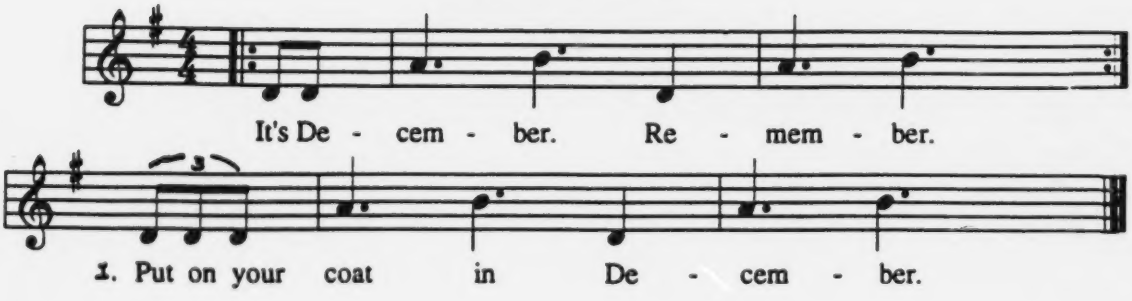
With special thanks to:
Peggy Johnson - Word Processing -
Lacey Center
Judy Henneberger - Music Department -
Walnut Hill
Carmen Bovell, and so many of you for your
encouragement.

Music

"NOVEMBER"



"DECEMBER"



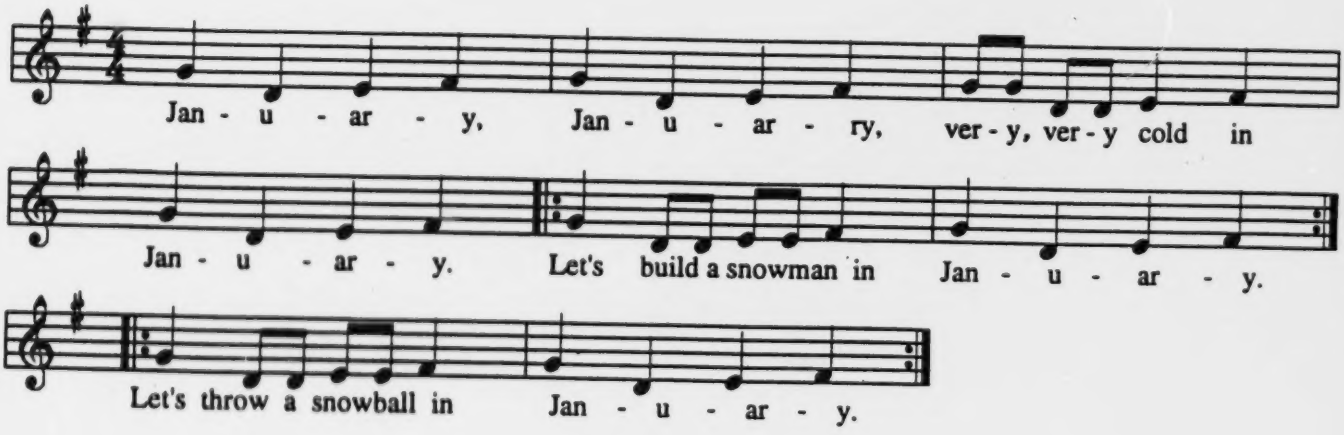
- continue with hat, boots, gloves, scarf, etc.

"MAY"

It's May. It's May, the love - ly month of May. May
I go out to play? _____ May I play with my friends? _____ It's
May. It's May, the love - ly month of May. IT'S MAY !

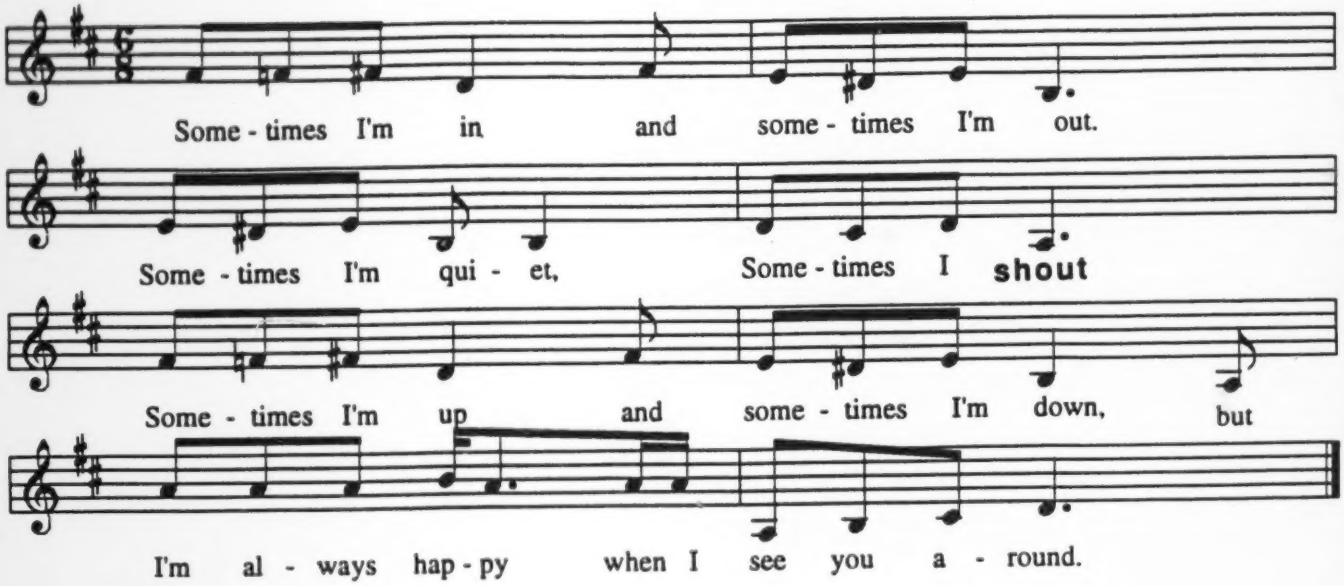
Note: Children's response after your question: "Yes you may". Try some negatives - e.g. Teacher: "May I play with matches?" Children: "No you may not!" etc.
(These responses are spoken.)

"JANUARY"



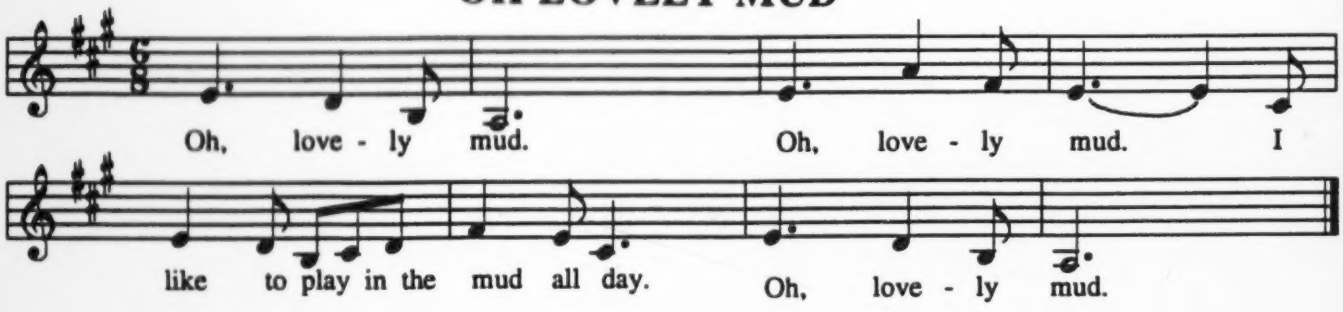
Note: Let the children suggest more actions.

"OPPOSITES"

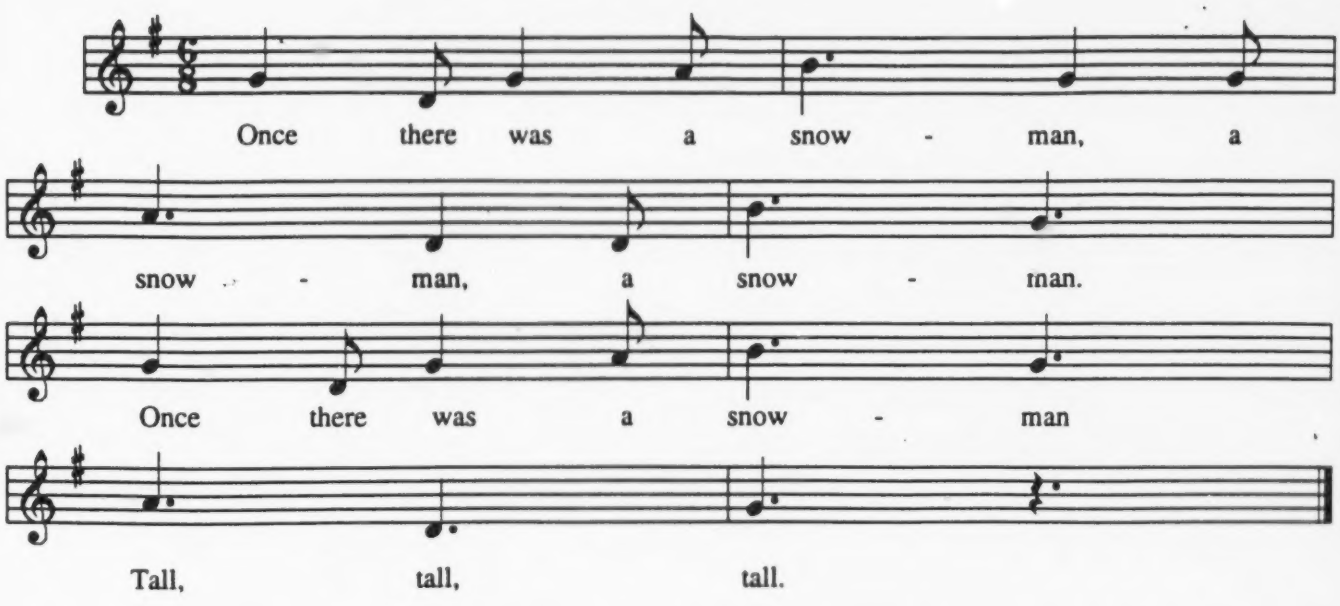

Some - times I'm in and some - times I'm out.
Some - times I'm qui - et, Some - times I shout
Some - times I'm up and some - times I'm down, but
I'm al - ways hap - py when I see you a - round.

Note: You can continue with other rhyming opposites, e.g.: young-old, hot-cold, wet-dry, laugh-cry, dark-light, day-night, etc. (Don't forget gestures)

"OH LOVELY MUD"



"THE SNOWMAN"



2nd verse: In the sun he melted, melted, melted. In the sun he melted - small . . .small . . . small

'UMBRELLAS"

Umbrellas go up. Um - brel-las go down.
When - ev-er April show - ers
come to town. They're red and green and blue and brown. Um-
brellas go up. Um - brellas go down.

Note: Don't forget arm movements for up and down. You can also vary size with your movements.

Other Songs Included In the Activities

Down On Grandpa's Farm - Traditional children's song ("Sing Your Sillies Out" - Wolf Trap Institute)

Funga - West African Chant ("Wiggle Your Waggles Away" Wolf Trap Institute)

Going On A Picnic - Album by Raffi

John The Rabbit - American Folk Game Song (Silver Burdette Music available at Fine Arts Library - Walnut Hills)

Let Me Tell You How I Feel - workshop tape - John Taylor

Love Somebody - Silver Burdette Music - Walnut Hills.

Peanut Butter and Jelly - traditional camp song - "Sing Your Sillies Out" - Wolf Trap Institute.

Skinna Marink - author unknown "Sing Your Sillies Out" - Wolf Trap Institute.

Thanks Alot - album of songs by Raffi.

When the Rain Comes Down - Bob Devlin "Sing Your Sillies Out" - Wolf Trap Institute.

Album

Listen Move and Dance II
Lyons Company
530 Riverview Ave.
Elkhart, Indiana 46514

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Additional Resources

Lenore Blank Kelner, The Creative Classroom - A Guide For Using Creative Drama In The Classroom - Pre K-6, Heinemann- Portsmouth, New Hamphire, 1993.

Wolf Trap Institute, Early Learning Through the Arts, Wake Your Wishes Up, 1993 Edition.

Some Suitable Books

A Tree Is Nice - Udry
All I Am - Roe
Anna the Sunflower Child - Carlstrom
Ask Mr. Bear - Flack
Away Went the Farmer's Hat - Nodest
Bobby's Zoo - Lunn (Rookie Reader series)
The Carrot Seed - Krauss
Dear Zoo - Campbell
Gilberto and The Wind - Ets
The Gunniwolf - Harper
It's Mine - Campbell
I Wish I Could Fly - Maris
Jambo Means Hello - Feelings
Jump Frog Jump - Kalan
Little Blue Bug - Poulet
The Little Engine That Could
Mrs. Wishy Washy - The Wright Books Series
Mushroom In the Rain - Ginsburg
Pierre - Sendak
Round Robin - Kent
The Runnaway Bunny - Brown
Sitting In My Box - Lillegard
Sleepy Bear - Dabcovich
Turtle Day - Florian
The Very Busy Spider - Carle
We're Going On A Bear Hunt - Rosen
Where Does the Brown Bear Go? - Weiss
Where Is Spot? - Hill